



A quarterly newsletter for WDVA employees

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Hard Work Prepares Agency for Future

*By John King, WDVA
Director*

The constant talk of budget crises, slumping economies and reductions in force can wear on even the strongest individuals. It is sometimes easy to let the doom and gloom creep in and dominate our attitudes toward our everyday routines. Yes, it's true that the challenges facing the Washington Department

of Veterans Affairs this legislative session are the most difficult I've seen. It is also true, that when I talk with my colleagues, there is no debate that the state's budget deficit is the largest they can remember. The truth is that budget writers will be faced with incredibly hard choices this year – choices that will potentially impact how WDVA and other agencies function.

The other side of that story is what you and the Washington Department of Veterans Affairs have been doing over the past few years to make sure the agency could get through the tough times we face today. The news of budget shortfalls isn't new to any of us, but I have to say that WDVA is in a good position to face the challenges that lie ahead because of your outstanding performance!

Staff at each of the three State Veterans Homes, Veterans Services, Financial Services and Central Office have done more for this agency than many people thought possible. It hasn't been easy and it hasn't always been without controversy, but all of your hard work has made WDVA a viable agency – a leader in the nation – with a clear and convincing story to tell.

Here are some of your accomplishments:

■ Sustaining Bed-Fill levels over six years. The diligence of all Homes staff members – from custodial staff who ready the rooms to nursing and benefits staff who assist with admissions – is the absolute key to our success! For most of October, 2002, both Retsil and Orting were 100% full!

■ Less reliance on the State General Fund. Because of the efforts of staff members – keeping beds full and the facilities in compliance with Medicaid rules – WDVA has become a way for Washington State to save money in the budget.

■ Citation Free Surveys! It is almost unheard of for a nursing facility to be citation free, but Orting has been citation free in the Medicaid survey two out of the last three years! While the 2002 results are not yet in for Retsil and Spokane, both have received high marks from the VA and Medicaid survey teams. All three State Veterans Homes provide the highest quality of care possible to our state's veterans.



Sustaining Bed-Fill levels over six years.

HARD WORK from page 1



The Spokane Veterans Home has found its niche in the community caring for extremely high acuity residents and doing it with a minimum number of staff members.

Let us continue *Serving Those Who Served* with high standards, positive attitudes and faith that our hard work will be recognized.



The Veterans Benefits Specialists and Veteran Community Service Coordinators have quietly been making improvements in the way claims for Washington State veterans are prepared and filed.

■ **Contributions of the Spokane Veterans Home.** This facility represents a huge accomplishment for WDVA. The Spokane Veterans Home has found its niche in the community caring for extremely high acuity residents and doing it with a minimum number of staff members.

■ **Reorganization of the Business Team.** Over the past several months, the business team has become a highly functional, dynamic group with a clear mission and an understanding of how to accomplish that mission. As an example, the VA Fiscal Audit was just completed and resulted in no discrepancies for WDVA! This is incredible considering the scope of the change the group has just experienced.

■ **Focus on Field Services.** The Veterans Benefits Specialists and Veteran Community Service Coordinators have quietly been making improvements in the way claims for Washington State veterans are prepared and filed. Their diligence and partnerships with the Federal VA, Veteran Service Organizations, Counties and others have made Washington State second in the nation in the number of Compensation and Pension (C&P) claims for veterans. This work has resulted in Washington State veterans receiving over \$732 million annually in C&P claims.

Each of these examples offers a glimpse of what WDVA employees can do. Our combined efforts have made this a viable agency and - more importantly - have improved the quality of care and the quality of life for Washington veterans.

While our many accomplishments do not guarantee the agency won't be impacted by budget cuts this session, they do allow us to tell a story of success through the combined efforts of all staff members. Our ability to manage resources effectively and efficiently while serving the ever-growing needs of the veterans community, highlights the importance of your work.

As we celebrate our accomplishments – and during the upcoming holiday season, as we celebrate our family and friends – let us all keep in mind the importance of our mission. Let us continue *Serving Those Who Served* with high standards, positive attitudes and faith that our hard work will be recognized.

I will make every effort to keep you informed as the Governor and the Legislature debate the future of government services in Washington State. I encourage all of you to stay well and maintain confidence that your hard work and diligence will pay off for you and for our veterans. In the meantime – Keep up the Good Work!

Agency Critical Few Strategies

By Christine Touris, WDVA Quality/Strategic Planning Manager

What are Critical Few Strategies?

In the interest of our many competing priorities and considering our present budget situation, our management team has identified actions that we as an agency should focus on. We realize we cannot do all that we desire in a quality manner with our limited time and resources. Therefore, the critical few strategies will assist us in staying focused.

The strategies include the Director's Performance Agreement Strategies as well as other strategies requiring immediate attention. (Please see the V-Net for more information on the Director's performance agreement with the governor.)

Other strategies requiring our immediate attention are:

- the reengineering of business processes;
- continued work on the Master Plan;
- maximizing bed fill at all three homes; and
- agency budget tracking and monitoring

They must be provided priority attention in developing, working, monitoring, and reporting. The Quality Office will be working directly with Strategy Leads to ensure solid measurements are established and effective monitoring and control processes are developed for each strategy. You are personally invited to take an active part in ensuring we are successful in achieving our outcomes for the agency's critical few strategies. Please feel free to contact me if you have ideas about agency strategies – ChristineT@dva.wa.gov or (360) 725-2166.

GOAL 1: IMPROVE THE QUALITY OF CARE AND SERVICES FOR VETERANS AND THEIR FAMILIES			
Objective		Strategy	
Customer and Constituents	Provide Residents and the Veterans Community with Appropriate Services	Master Plan Continuum of Care	Maximizing Bed Fill Spokane Veterans Home
GOAL 2: GOAL MAXIMIZE RESOURCES TO HONOR THE NATIONS DEBT TO VETERANS			
Financial and Social Costs	Maximize the Ability of WDVA to Serve Veterans and Their Family Members at a Reasonable Cost	Outreach to Homeless Women Veterans Claims Quality Assurance	
GOAL 3: REVIEW CORE PROCESSES TO ANTICIPATE AND INFLUENCE FUTURE NEEDS			
Internal Business Processes	Increase Effectiveness and Efficiency of Service Delivery	Resident Centered Care Budget Tracking & Monitoring Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA) Implementation	
	Improve the Management of Data so that it Drives Decision-Making and Agency Performance	Business Process Reengineering ADL	
GOAL 4: CONTINUE INVESTING IN STAFF AND PROVIDING THE TOOLS THAT RESULT IN HIGH QUALITY SERVICES			
Learning and Growth	Increase employee satisfaction	Valuing Diversity Employees Survey	

Olympia Veteran Service Center Update



Barb Logan

Barbara Logan is now working as the Homeless Women Veterans Reintegration Project (HWVRP) Coordinator for Pierce, Kitsap and Thurston County, and Patricia Johnson is the project coordinator for King and Snohomish County.

WDVA was awarded this project through an open competitive grant process last July, in competition with the 75 largest cities in the nation, and is one of two nationwide that targets homeless women veterans. The services provided via HVRP (an employment and training project for homeless veterans), include outreach, needs assessment, program enrollment and case management. Support services and financial support with housing, childcare, dental, eyeglasses, transportation, employment-related services and training are available.

Dick Venesky has accepted the Veterans Estate Management Program (VEMP) Supervisor position.



Dick Venesky



Sharon Lindley

Sharon Lindley has moved to the VEMP section as a Veterans Estate Manager.

Kudos to Colleen

WDVA's Public Information Officer, Colleen Gilbert, recently received a Certificate of Achievement for being nominated for the 2002 Outstanding Service to Veterans Awards in the Outstanding Employee category.

Among Colleen's many accomplishments, she was recognized for working tirelessly to ensure that our state's citizens hold veterans high in their priorities by getting the agency message out to the public through news articles, special events and projects.

Most recently she was the principal organizer for a Castle Rock Motorcycle Club weekend event that honored veterans and yielded a significant monetary contribution for homeless veterans. This required a substantial investment of her personal time, something she did willingly and cheerfully. Colleen is not a veteran, but the love and care with which she planned this event, and many others, has earned her the respect of many veterans. These qualities are difficult to find even in many of those who "have been there."

Colleen Gilbert is a person who has deep respect for those who served and demonstrates it every day.



Retsil Holds Public Meeting

The Washington Veterans Home hosted two public meetings on October 29 to update volunteers and community members on the status of the 240-bed construction project. The first meeting focused on the volunteers and how their needs would be accommodated during construction and once the new building is complete. Approximately 50 volunteers attended and were able to view the facility model to get an idea of how the new buildings would fit in with the existing buildings.

At 6:30pm, a second meeting was held in an effort to engage the Retsil and Port Orchard communities in the exciting changes that will soon take place. Several local residents attended and asked questions about the impact of construction on the neighborhood directly behind the facility.

Because the area is mainly a residential neighborhood with narrow roadways and steep hills, the construction team does not plan to use those roads for the transportation of project materials; however, the fence will likely be opened to allow access for staff, visitors and emergency vehicles.

If you have more questions, please use the Master Plan Question forms to ask or e-mail them to heidia@dva.wa.gov.



Superintendent John Lee answers questions about the new nursing facility as friends and neighbors look over the model.

Marketing the Spokane Area

In an effort to fill the final few available beds at the Spokane Home, several billboards in the Spokane area will soon highlight the facility. The ad features Diane Ruby, LPN 2 and resident Dave Tevlin.

The Admissions Team, Robin Wittenberg, Mac Harris and Michael Regan are conducting face to face connections throughout the hospitals and clinics as well.

SPOKANE VETERANS HOME

**QUALITY
NURSING HOME
CARE FOR VETERANS**

1-877-VETS-R-US

Have You Visited the WEB Lately?



The WDVA V-Net <http://isdev/> and the external web site www.dva.wa.gov are invaluable communication tools for internal and external customers.

Please help us keep the information accurate and up-to-date. E-mail the webmaster webmaster@dva.wa.gov with changes, especially phone numbers, job titles or contact information.

AND YES, PLEASE let us know of any mistakes, links that don't work, or ideas you have to make our sites more easily navigated by both you – the internal customer – and all the external customers who count on WDVA to provide the best service possible.

Healthy environment, good relationships—

NINE TIPS FOR FOSTERING A RESPECTFUL WORK ENVIRONMENT

The following article while appearing at first glance to be for supervisors provides extremely important information for all of us to use and think about, as we go about both our work with WDVA and our private lives each day. Research continues to support the most important thing each of us would like in our work environment is full appreciation for work done, with the second most important thing is a feeling of being in on things (Wages are number five). Treating others with respect for their ideas, feelings, and hard work whether you are a supervisor, co-worker, or employee is the most important step each of us can take in making WDVA the best place we've ever worked.

Very few have been blessed with the mission we have, the skills we have, and the co-workers we have.

—Gary Klein, Chair WDVA
Diversity Committee
360 893-4503.

• Schedule regular meetings.



Whether weekly or bimonthly, set aside individual time with each employee, and employees as a group. You might opt for a formal meeting, a casual in-office chat or a discussion over lunch or morning coffee. Regardless of the format you choose, set a consistent timeframe that lets employees know the meetings are important to

you. Take hand-written notes for future reference and follow up on agreed-upon actions.

• **Allow for question-and-answer opportunities.** Q & A opportunities can take many forms, including: One-on-one meetings, staff meetings (with varying participants), suggestion boxes (with appropriate follow-up), employee representative panels, graffiti walls or posters, e-mail communication and bulletin boards. By offering multiple formats, you help ensure that all employees have an opportunity to inquire about subjects of importance to them, in a way that suits their comfort zone.

• **Provide speedy and complete information.** Timely responses to inquiries can mean a lot to your employees and will help to bolster their trust in you. The second half of the equation is knowing the most effective ways to share the information; always consider the type of information, its relevance to your staff and their preferred mode of receiving information. For more tips on which communication vehicles work best and when, check out the IVC article of the same name that's linked below.

• **Be honest to build trust.** If you don't know the answer, say so. If you have a tough question, ask it. If you think employees are mulling a question that they're unsure of how to raise, bring it up yourself. If you say you're going to

do something, do it, or provide an update as to why the schedule has changed. Such behavior will encourage your employees to submit questions, ideas, problems and difficulties.

• Help employees make commitments.

Provide employees with calendars to help keep track of

commitments and plans, and consider sending them to a good time management workshop. Ask for deadlines for task completion, and clearly identify priorities. If planning is a new area for some employees, talk them through those tasks they think will move their assignment from start to finish (don't give them the answers, help them find the answers). Check with employees on their accomplishments and possible information needs.

• **Invite participation.** Hold meetings that include employees from different groups and try to encourage everyone to speak. If someone is a bit shy or unsure, simply start with a question such as, "John, we'd love your perspective as well. What do you think of what we've talked about so far?" This will provide the group with different perspectives of the issues discussed, and help ensure that a few individuals don't



dominate every discussion. It'll also help the more reserved participants get comfortable sharing their views.

- **Create diverse teams.**

Create teams across levels and divisions to improve the communication flow and to demonstrate your commitment to effective communication. Another benefit of pairing employees who don't usually work together? Increased awareness for the responsibilities and contributions of others in the organization. It's harder to perpetuate the "Us versus Them" gossip mill when you know that "Them" is really Jim, Ann and Ryan.



- **Welcome (and ask for) suggestions.**

Get suggestions from employees on a regular basis, either through widespread communication vehicles or by asking them individually. When you follow up on a suggestion, complaint, idea, or question, be sure to let the person who brought up the issue know that you addressed it. Don't just let the issue drop, or you'll teach employees that it's not worth participating.

- **Keep information flowing.**

Use multiple avenues of communication to help ensure you're keeping people informed. Don't assume that everyone knows what's going on, even in a small group. Also, remember that not everyone processes information the same way, so face-to-face, electronic, print and other formats allow more people to really tune in to your message. For example, follow up memos with a check-in voicemail message, open discussions at staff meetings or during one-on-one meetings. Don't assume that just because a memo has gone out, that it's been understood and accepted—instead, ask questions to confirm results.

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PEBB 2002 Open Enrollment

Open enrollment for state employees began Oct. 21 and runs through Nov. 30. To save on printing and mailing costs, employees will not receive an open enrollment booklet, but will find all open enrollment information on-line at: www.wa.gov/HCA/pebb.htm

For your convenience, all PEBB open enrollment information is posted on the V-NET <http://isdev>.

For those who have problems accessing the site, check with Personnel for copies of the medical/dental enrollment forms.

SPECIAL NOTE: Please make sure your home address is correct on your paycheck... your W-2 form will be mailed to this address in January.

Klein Accepts Position with DOC



Gary Klein, HR Manager at the WA Soldiers Home is moving on to the Department of Corrections. Klein has worked at Orting since 1990. His contributions to the agency over the years have been numerous...he will be greatly missed. Staff members gave Klein a send off party and wished him well in his new position. He started his new job in Olympia on November 18.

Holiday Season Reminders



*** Weather** - Occasionally, there are work stoppages or absences that raise questions as to how employees should be compensated for the time lost.

- If a state office or work location becomes non-operational due to inclement weather or a natural disaster, non-emergency employees should be released at no loss in pay for the duration of the disruption to services.
- There is no authority to provide extra compensation for employees who work their normal hours during these disruptions.
- If the work location is fully operational but the employee is unable to report to, or remain at, work due to inclement weather the employee should take leave in the following order: (1) compensatory or exchange time; (2) vacation leave; (3) sick leave up to three days; or, (4) leave without pay. If the employee reports to work but is late, he/she is allowed up to one hour paid time with the remainder to be taken as leave as listed above.

*** Gifts** - Exchanging or accepting gifts from residents is considered unethical. As stated in Policy 680.600 Ethical and Professional Standards

IV. Gifts

- A. Employees must not receive, accept, take, seek or solicit, directly or indirectly, anything of economic value such as a gift, gratuity, or favor from any person doing business, seeking to do business or receiving service from this or any other state agency. The Appointing Authority must approve exceptions in writing.

(Refer any questions to your Human Resource Consultant)

Employee Survey Coming in December

Your feedback provides important information for the management teams to improve the way we, as an agency, do business.

This year the survey is available on-line and can be completed at your work-station. For staff without computer access, computers will be set-up and available for you to complete the survey. Surveys completed on-line are still completely anonymous! If you prefer to complete the survey the old fashioned way – paper copies will be available as well.

Everyone is encouraged to take a few moments to complete the survey. Remember, the results help make decisions about how the agency can better serve you!

If you have any questions, please contact Glenda Vick, Human Resource Consultant, at glendav@dva.wa.gov or (360) 725-2174. You may also contact your local HR Consultant.